

Board/Committee:	Community Board
Date of meeting:	Wednesday 3 rd November 2021
Title:	Commemorative Bench Seat Policy
Author:	Head of Streetscene
Status:	FOR DECISION

Purpose

To seek approval for the adoption of the Commemorative Bench Seat Policy.

The overall objective of the policy is to adopt a consistent approach to the management of the commemorative bench seats in the Borough and introduce a structured maintenance process funded through ongoing agreement periods.

Recommendation

That the Board approves the Commemorative Bench Seat Policy (appended to this report) and provides delegated authority to the Head of Streetscene to:-

- I. Cease the provision of bench seats where sites are deemed exhausted or unsuitable.**
- II. Determine fees based on supply, installation and maintenance costs each financial year.**
- III. Agree that the provision of income for maintenance purposes is transferred on an annual basis.**
- IV. Manage the service provision in accordance with the policy.**

1.0 Background

1.1 Gosport Borough Council (GBC) provides the opportunity for customers to fund the supply and installation of commemorative bench seats along Gosport's seafront and within parks and open spaces.

1.2 The Council recognises the importance for individuals and/or organisations to commemorate loved ones by funding a commemorative bench seat thereby providing a valuable asset for the enjoyment of visitors and residents of Gosport alike.

1.3 The Council manages the demand for commemorative bench seats by determining the number of commemorative bench seats that can be accommodated along the seafronts and within the parks and open spaces, taking uniformity, aesthetic and consistency into account with the introduction of waiting lists where appropriate.

1.4 The management and administration of commemorative bench seat provision along seafront locations is governed by previously determined spaces. Allocated spaces have been evenly spaced in a consistent manner

so as not to detract from the surroundings or prime purpose of the seafront ensuring the area remains aesthetically pleasing. On completion of all those allocated spaces having been adopted the relevant waiting list is subsequently closed.

- 1.5 Requests for commemorative bench seats within the Borough's parks and open spaces has proven less popular and is managed and administered without the need for the introduction of waiting lists.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The management and administration of commemorative bench seats is delivered by Streetscene.

- 2.2 Due to the current level of demand for commemorative bench seats Streetscene have undertaken a review of the service, which highlighted the need for a more stringent procedure with the amount of available space being a premium particularly along seafront locations.

- 2.3 The introduction of a 10 year agreement period will allow the Council to maintain up to date records for applicants and provide a maintenance schedule. The cessation of any agreement period will provide new applicants the opportunity to use a bench at a location that was previously deemed full.

- 2.4 A 10 year period was agreed as being comparable with other Local Authorities, it further allows for a suitable period of time to retain communication with applicants whilst allowing them many years to commemorate their loved one.

- 2.5 In agreement with the Friends of Stokes Bay group the review has highlighted that Stokes Bay can no longer currently facilitate further new commemorative bench seats and that the Council would cease offering benches at this location.

New commemorative bench seats requested for Stokes Bay will require any prior agreement period to have expired before the removal and replacement of the existing commemorative bench seat. As per appended policy ref items 4 and 5.

- 2.6 The maintenance fee charged will cover the on-going maintenance and provide an additional income that will supplement the existing budget held for the annual maintenance of the Borough's bench seat stock.

3.0 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 The policy provides a clear, consistent approach for Gosport through the effective management and delivery of the service.

- 3.2 The maintenance income enables the Council to undertake a maintenance regime to supplement the existing level of provision.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The adoption of the Commemorative Bench Seat Policy demonstrates that GBC is committed to providing the opportunity for individuals to commemorate their loved ones by funding a commemorative bench seat for the enjoyment of residents and visitors of Gosport alike.

Financial Services comments:	No immediate financial implications as GBC look to use the Streetscene Grounds Maintenance Team for maintenance and minor improvements with the existing budgets together with the maintenance contribution.
Legal Services comments:	No comment
Equality and Diversity:	An attached IIA has been completed on the policy to ensure a fair and consistent approach.
Climate Change implications:	All new and replacement commemorative bench seats are to be made of recycled material.
Crime and Disorder:	None for the purpose of this report
Service Improvement Plan implications:	To be delivered by Streetscene
Corporate Plan:	The Council's aim through the delivery of this policy is to improve the quality of service for residents and visitors to Gosport along with providing a greener, safer and sustainable future in the provision of commemorative bench seats
Risk Assessment:	As per 3
Background Papers:	Commemorative Bench Seat Policy
Appendices:	None
Report Author/Lead Officer:	Dave Stubington – Cemetery & Arboricultural Officer Sarah Glassock – Assistant Cemetery & Arboricultural Officer